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ABSTRACT

The flow diagrams in this document provide cognitive maps to aid in synthesizing diverse areas of knowledge in a special brand of field theory. A model is presented which highlights the domains of structural functionalism (with concepts of cultural, personal and societal systems) and symbolic interactionism (with the concepts of self, sentiments and role-taking). The paper offers an accounting scheme or extended check list for analyzing problems which can be viewed in terms of some combination of these variables. The basic diagram starts with conflict between two parties, thus emphasizing relationship over individual psychology. It deals with a classic problem of social science--how to handle conflict as a manageable problem, or use it as a stimulus to achieve orderly social change. (Author)

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MAPPING JOINT ACTION

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ABSTRACT

Carefully planned flow diagrams can provide an invaluable cognitive map to aid in synthesizing diverse areas of knowledge in a special brand of field theory. An unusually powerful general model is presented here in a way which is arranged to highlight the domains of structural functionalism (with the concepts of cultural, personal and situational or societal systems and roles, as well as Parsons' four-functional paradigm and Merton's manifest and latent functions) and symbolic interactionism (with the concepts of self, sentiments, role taking, strategies of action, joint action, and the extensions into role making, knowledge of other, role bargaining, and the I-Me interaction process). This provides an accounting scheme or extended check list for analyzing virtually any new problem that can be viewed in terms of some combination of these variables. It emphasizes process without neglecting structure. Most theories emphasize one almost to the exclusion of the other. They are by that measure incomplete as deductive theories strictly construed. The statement of specific hypotheses relating pairs of variables (contained in the flow diagram) is essential to prediction as well as to formal theorizing, and thus to understanding and explanation. The basic diagram starts with conflict between two parties, thus emphasizing relationship over individual psychology and the most universal problem of social science, how to handle conflict as a manageable problem or as a stimulus to achieving orderly social change. We thus have a prototypical example of the use of general systems theory.

ADVANTAGES OF THIS MODEL

The model of joint action presented here can provide a heuristic starting point for making sense out of complex structures and social processes within an almost unlimited number of content areas. The approach represents a kind of policy mapping. It combines notions of applied sociology (Lazarsfeld, 1967), policy sciences (Lasswell, 1971; Coleman, 1972) and the use of general systems thinking to unite social theory and social policy (as idealized by Myrdal, 1953). Policy mapping is a notion suggesting that such flow diagrams can be used to outline the sequence of choices made by persons in interaction, in or out of formal organizations.

As Jon Turner (1974) and many others have pointed out, there have been many polemics arguing the case for one side only in the generation old debate between structural functionalism and symbolic interactionism. He then suggests many commonalities or points of similarity or complementarity, which is a first step in the right direction. One thing is clear, that neither side understands the other side very well. I am arguing that it takes rare breadth of perspective to encompass any two traditions and do justice to both. Most do not have the energy or persistence. To keep an open mind requires daily effort. Then in order to be able to take a certain amount of license with a tradition it takes some boldness or originality or blind blundering. But surely there is not a corner on truth in any one academic tradition. It is time to stop talking past one another and step forward bravely with new synthetic ideas instead of the same old rehashed polemics. The general type of approach taken here was stimulated by all the authors cited in the bibliography, particularly by Walter Buckley (1967, though they should not be blamed for the paper's weaknesses).

THE BASIC DIAGRAM

The three columns in Diagram A represent the small-scale equivalent of three general action systems (Parsons, 1966), from left to right, the cultural, personality and societal systems. Somewhat more manageable concepts are used here (as discussed elsewhere by Slawski, 1971), namely, cultural roles, personal or intrapersonal roles, and situational or societal roles, because these are patterned more understandably and are thus easier and more natural for the human actor, let along the social scientist, to spontaneously take

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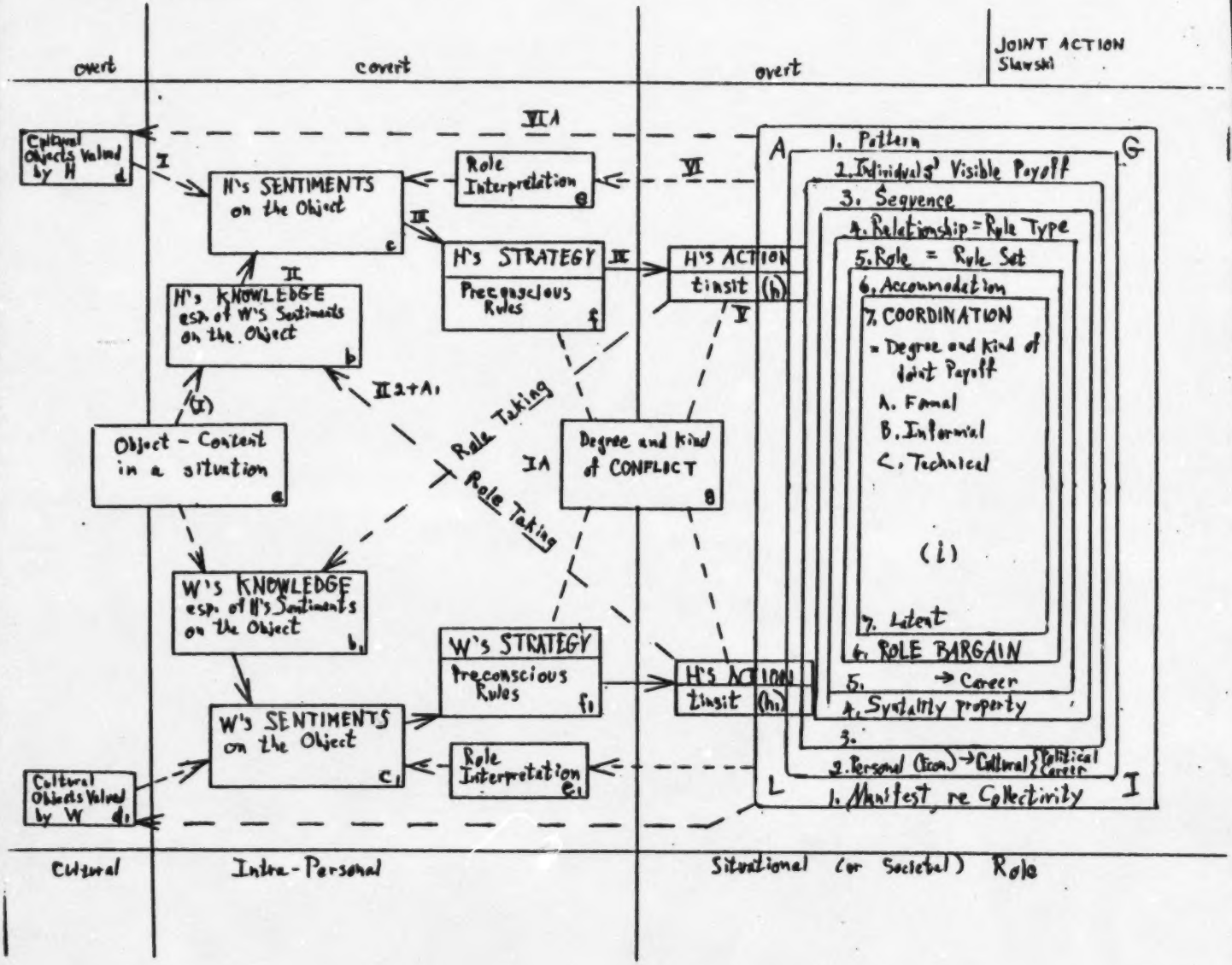
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JOINT ACTION
Slawski
VI A
Cultural Objects Valued by H
d
I
H's SENTIMENTS on the Object
c
Role Interpretation
g
VI
III
H's STRATEGY
Precognacious Rules
f
III
H's ACTION
tinsit (h)
V
II
H's KNOWLEDGE esp. of W's Sentiments on the Object
b
II + A
(V)
Object - Content in a situation
a
Role Taking
Role Taking
IA
Degree and kind of CONFLICT
g
W's KNOWLEDGE esp. of H's Sentiments on the Object
b1
W's STRATEGY
Preconscious Rules
f1
H's ACTION
tinsit (h1)
W's SENTIMENTS on the Object
c1
Role Interpretation
g1
Cultural Objects Valued by W
d1
A
G
1. Pattern
2. Individuals' Visible Payoff
3. Sequence
4. Relationship = Role Type
5. Role = Role Set
6. Accommodation
7. COORDINATION
= Degree and kind of Joint Payoff
A. Formal
B. Informal
C. Technical
(i)
7. Latent
6. ROLE BARGAIN
5. → Career
4. Symbolic property
3.
2. Personal (Econ.) → Cultural {Political Career
1. Manifest re Collectivity
L
I
Cultural
Intra-Personal
Situational (or Societal) Role

into account than are whole societies, personalities or cultures. The cultural area is seen in terms of overtly observable values and common sentiments of one's society or subgroups. The situational or societal roles involve overtly observable social behavior of individuals or groups. Some modification of Parsons' notion of personality system has been made here when the author chose to focus only on covert aspects, those occurring somehow inside the person, or those observable only indirectly through observing his outward behavior. It seems that taking this approach is more useful for a sociological analysis since it highlights the predominantly inward processes that make up the person as he views himself.

It also more accurately encompasses the three primary aspects of the person (Parsons and Shils, 1951) represented in the boxes, namely, the (cognitive) knowledge, (affective) sentiments, and the (conative) strategies. Incidentally, these terms were chosen because they are commonly understood, relatively unambiguous and at the same time suggestive enough to help the analyst to synthesize and apply a large body of related literature. This would not be the case if terms were used which were more characteristic of either structural functionalism separately or of symbolic interactionism alone. As it is, the use of the terms employed here is probably more closely aligned with that of symbolic interactionism. In fact, part of the title was suggested by Blumer's (1966) discussion of "joint action" as a synonym for Mead's "social act" (1934).

Let us begin at the center on the left side of the diagram with the box labeled "object-content in a situation." Follow the arrows from left to right across the top of the page representing actions of H (for "husband," which is the mirror image of the bottom line, for W representing the "wife"). H and W can be any two people, A and B, or any two parties, a person A and group B, etc. Some mental adaptation must naturally be made by the reader when interpreting the line of action as representing a group instead of an individual.

We see that the dotted arrow leads from "object-content" to "H's KNOWLEDGE (of W's sentiments) on the object." This box represents the cognitive component and is intended first of all to mean H's basic knowledge. It is stated in reflexive terms, meaning not just H's knowledge of the object or issue, but H's knowledge of what the other person, W, is feeling about that object or issue. This is partly or perhaps mainly a result of "role-taking" (See dotted arrow to this box entering from the lower right of the box).

The dotted arrows represent lines of influence or simply logical directions to follow. Or, if they move from right to left, they are feedback arrows. The solid arrows represent definite directions of positive action or thought by either party to the interaction.

The next arrow is a solid one running from H's KNOWLEDGE to H's SENTIMENTS, indicating that one's knowledge usually influences his sentiments. While there is no solid evidence of the extent of such influence, it is generally agreed that it takes place. Of course one's sentiments are strongly influenced by 1) his cultural background, and 2) even the subcultural factors he senses to be operating in this present situation under analysis (indicated by the dotted arrows running 1) from "cultural objects valued by H" to "H's SENTIMENTS," and 2) in turn from the concentric rectangles at the far right to the box at top left labeled "cultural objects valued by H." There is also a third line of influence to sentiments running from the concentric rectangles at right directly through the "Role Interpretation" box to H's SENTIMENTS. This means that H perceives the ongoing social patterns directly and interprets them in a broad role-taking process as the action and interaction proceeds.

The next solid arrow runs from "H's SENTIMENTS" to "H's Strategy," meaning that one's strategies of action are determined largely by one's sentiments on this issue at this particular time (as he, H, defines the situation). Strategies heavily involve certain key symbolic interactionist terms, namely, the internalized conversation of gestures between the "I" and the "Me" as well as the individual's "definition of the situation." These concepts imply that the individual can creatively role make (R. Turner, 1962) and need not passively accept and deterministically play the exact roles society asks of him. Thus we now have incorporated all three components of human action (used by Parsons), cognitive (knowledge), affective (sentiments) and conative (strategies). The latter three terms are more familiar to symbolic interactionists (Shibutani, 1964), namely, knowledge, sentiments and strategies.

In the lower half of the box, below "H's Strategy," we see the words "preconscious rules." The author put this notion here in order to remind the analyst to consider those taken-for-granted rules of everyday activity which are normally below the threshold of awareness (as discussed by the ethnomethodologists, e.g., Garfinkel, 1967).

The next arrow runs from "H's Strategy" to "H's Action." At last we have come out of the covert realm of the intra-personal or personal role area and moved into that of the situational or societal, the realm of the overt. Note that we began in the intrapersonal, inside the person, with "object content" which partly straddles the left or cultural column (another portion of the realm of the overt and observable). Objects of greatest importance are partly cultural and partly personal, as perceived by the individual. Recall that social or societal action when it forms repeated patterns becomes cultural and falls into the domain of values and sentiments (Parsons, 1937).

Strategies of action have the most direct influence and provide the most direct impulse to overt action. The lower half of the overt action box reads "tinsit;" a term (invented by a symbolic interactionist, W. Coutu, 1949) which is a most useful shorthand term for "tendencies in a situation," a pattern of habitual action in a series of similar circumstances.

Notice that the "H's Action" box straddles the concentric rectangles to indicate that it is individual action which forms the broad patterns which in turn make up the social fabric. If we follow the same pattern for W (or wife) (as we saw for H) at the line of action starting at the lower left side moving down and to the right. This line ends in W's action, which also straddles and merges with the concentric rectangles at the right half of the diagram. (Again note that the lower half is the mirror image of the top half of the total diagram). When these two lines of action, H's (the top half) and W's (the lower half) form patterns at the right they represent the major social patterns resulting from the conflict situation being analyzed.

Looking at the very center of the diagram we see a box labeled "Degree and Kind of CONFLICT." The box straddles the intrapersonal and situational (or societal) role columns. Conflict itself is either intrapersonal or social, or both. Of course, conflict is not a conflict issue unless it is perceived by the person(s) inside himself as an issue of conflict (not necessarily conscious). Conflict is defined as any opposition between persons. It might be overt or covert, concerning opinions, values, or survival interests. The dotted lines from the "strategy" boxes to the CONFLICT box are meant to indicate that the main source of conflict between parties is their strategies of action. This probably also suggests that the main first point of change to help control conflict is at the strategies of the participants. While there may be conflict implicit in the overtly social actions it does not become an issue until perceived as problematic by either party.

The rectangles in the right hand column (the situational or societal role column) are labeled with the simplest and most basic notions in the largest rectangles, the most specific and structured in the smallest rectangles. The items in the variable list become more specific as the number beside the variables in the upper list increases from 1 to 7. Looking at the corresponding list on the lower half of the page, numbered 1 to 7 from the bottom up, the lower numbers indicate the most manifest ideas, the higher the most latent (Merton's structural functionalist terms, 1957), with some additional descriptive terms sandwiched in between, in a way that will hopefully suggest new discoveries to the imagination of the analyst of any given situation. Note that the model will be of little use if it is not applied to the analysis of a concrete series of events described in a detailed manner.

Upon viewing a social situation (still looking at the concentric rectangles), observe that (1) the overall "pattern" of events is the first item that comes to our awareness. This is most manifest. We would then focus a bit more to see (2) the "individuals' visible payoff" from participating (first on a personal, then on a cultural level). Then we would see (3) the "sequence" of events or patterns of events, followed logically by (4) the fact of existence of a relationship (McCall et al, 1970, a main concern of symbolic interactionism) or "rule type" (meaning the guidelines normally operating for the relationship, such as friendship, co-worker, colleagueship, spouse, etc.). Syntality or "togetherness" of the relationship or group is under examination. Becoming still more specific we can observe (5) the "roles" or sets of rules operating in a more precise manner (e.g., father-daughter; vice-president and sales representative; or teacher of English and tenth grade student). It is here that the persons or relationship might take on the observable characteristics of a career or long-term, relatively fixed set of patterns. Then we could observe (6) the extent and kind of "accommodation" (a focus of Znaniecki, 1936, a symbolic interactionist) made between the parties or the person and his group(s), even how he achieved this through a process of bargaining with roles available to him (Goode, 1960; Slawski, 1971; a term bridging symbolic interactionism and structural functionalism).(7) Finally, we could observe the most latent as well as most specific characteristics of the patterning, the "coordination" (Georgopoulos and Mann, 1962) or degree and kind of payoff actually achieved by the

participants, on a formal, informal or technical basis (Hall, 1959, an anthropologist and linguist with ideas bridging symbolic interactionism and structural functionalism).

Having come this far we can look at the overall pattern represented by the rectangles as a pattern of social functions, analyzing them in terms of Parsons' (1951) four-functional paradigm for the societal action system. Recall that "L" stands for "latent pattern maintenance," and is discussed in terms of the values of the members of the social system, particularly as seen in the institutions of religion and the family. "I" stands for the "integration" function, discussed in terms of the society, particularly in the legal institutions. "G" stands for "goal-attainment," discussed in terms of the "structure of the collectivity," particularly as seen in the polity or political institutions. "A" stands for "adaptation," a function discussed in terms of roles, particularly as seen in the economic institutions. Parsons' "hierarchy of conditioning" (1966) sees that the chain of socialization influences people so as to have greater impact in the following order, namely, L, then I, then G, and finally A. Parsons' "hierarchy of control" (1966) suggests that social control is filtered in the reverse order, from A to G to I to L. These hierarchies can also be suggestive of new ideas when doing analyses in the context of discovery. Too often, Parsons' ideas have been criticised from the perspective of the context of verification. This author's experience indicates that Parsons' ideas are more useful for discovery than for verification.

HYPOTHESES

The following are some original and rather formally stated hypotheses (and definitions) which should help the reader to work his way through the causal sequences of the model. The numbers and letters correspond to arrows or boxes so numbered on the basic diagram. Numbers in parentheses on the basic diagram indicate that the hypothesis in question (e.g., (I)) only touches indirectly upon the matter of that hypothesis.

I. The objects valued in general by A in the context of his culture strongly influence his sentiments on a specific object that has become problematic or an issue of conflict in the context of his present ongoing situation.
   A. Conflict can be over any of a combination of cultural values, personal values or interests, situational problems (e.g., of behavioral coordination), strategies of action, etc.

II. The kind and degree of knowledge that A has 1) of the issue, and 2) of the sentiments of B (his partner or opponent) on the issue, depends on
   1) the accuracy of his perceptions of the issue, and
   2) his empathy (as seen in the accuracy of his knowledge and sensibility) for B regarding this issue.
   A. B's influence over A depends on A's reckoning of B's resources and of B's likelihood of exerting them if A does not please B.

III. A's sentiments on the object strongly influence his strategy of action (plans and preconscious rules) regarding the issue.
   (d) Preconscious rules = taken-for-granted rules of everyday activity which are normally below the threshold of consciousness.

IV. A's strategies are the most immediate determinant of his actions.

V. A's actions tend to form patterns of joint action with B's actions, which in turn develop through a series of largely tacit bargains (Schelling, 1960) into sequences of consensual arrangements, role sets, and ultimately societal and cultural institutions. (This is reminiscent of Shibutani and Kwan's symbolic interactionist propositions, 1965.)

VI. The actions of B and the overall patterns are observed by A and interpreted (in a role taking process) so as to feed back into A's sentiments on the original conflict.

   A. The patterns are also interpreted and assimilated back into the culture by the members of the society.

Remaining Definitions

A. The cultural and situational roles and modes of human action are overt and observable since they are external to the person.
B. Personal modes are covert and intrinsic to the person.
C. Each of these three role or action systems can be studied separately using the Parsonian four-functional paradigm, although the process by which one action system is linked theoretically with the other two seems to this writer to be more fully explained by the symbolic interactionist description, which focuses on the socio-personal process itself.

THE MODEL CONCRETELY APPLIED

With the preceding set of statements we have traced all the lines and defined or located all variables in the diagram. Since models are of little value unless

applied, we will now give a simple illustration to indicate a procedure which should aid the reader's thinking in the context of discovery. (The lower case letters indicate the box or arrow on the diagram to be illustrated.)

Let us take the example of a husband and wife recently married, trying to decide whether to have a baby in their first three years of marriage. a) The "object or content in a situation" is the possibility of having a baby. b) The husband knows that a baby would postpone his finishing graduate school for a year or two and be an extra expense for which he would have to take a full-time job. He also knows that his wife wants to have a baby soon because she feels it will be harder physically and mentally to have a first baby after she moves into her late twenties. b_1) The Wife knows that she does not want to extend her childbearing years beyond age 30 or 31. She also knows that her husband understands her basic feelings, but also that he would have difficulty comfortably supporting a family until he finishes his Master's degree in Business. She is presently working part-time and going to school part-time, but is convinced she could not work until the youngest child is as least six years old.
c_1) Her emotions and deeper sentiments tell her that she wants a baby within two years, even if it means some financial difficulty in the beginning.
d_1) Her family traditions and the influence of her close friends support the idea of childbearing in the early or mid-twenties.
e_1) She has seen some older relatives who had serious troubles with childbearing because they did not begin until their late twenties. She feels this is to be avoided, largely based on their experience. c) The husband feels pressured now, though he eventually wants children.
d) He is expected to raise a family by his relatives, especially by his parents. It is not yet culturally acceptable to have a childless marriage even though birth control methods are now considered quite safe and effective.
e) He has recently read an article or two on the possibility of safe childbearing after age thirty. But he also sees the difficulty experienced by his own mother, who had her fourth and last child at age thirty-two. She was never able to get a good job after her children were safely in school, except for routine secretarial or waitress-type jobs, because she was almost forty when she first sought work.
f) The husband thus proposes a solution, that they wait two years before trying to have a baby, because he will then have finished his M.B.A. f_1) The wife wants to begin after one year, though she is willing to work to save money until then.
g) This is the crux of their conflict. It does not seem unusually serious, but it is not yet clear to either party how to resolve it, except by ignoring it for now.
h_1) After a year of marriage, the wife puts on the pressure to try to get pregnant.
h) The husband has avoided discussing the issue openly until now, but finally lays his cards on the table, promising to relent after one more year, when he has finished school. They don't have enough money saved. If she works another year, they will be further ahead.
h_1 again) The argument is not unreasonable. She will be twenty six next year, still not too late to begin, since she only wants two children.
h again) He wins the point and is satisfied. After they come to their agreement he offers to take his wife for a weekend in the mountains to celebrate.
h_1 again) She gratefully accepts, discussing plans for their future family as they travel.
i) The social pattern that emerges is one of mutually agreed-upon, moderately traditional roles for husband and wife, leaving provision for the wife's career after the children are in school. They have struck a satisfactory role bargain. Since they have basically similar values and compatible family experiences, they accommodate easily. Their joint actions are well coordinated.
With this concrete example, the plausibility of applying the diagram and of synthesizing the two schools of thought should be enhanced by a small bit.

USE OF EMPTY DIAGRAM

Now that the reader has had the opportunity to work his way through a complete example of the model in use, another procedure may be helpful. Try using the same diagram with the words erased from the boxes. Then write down in more specific words the ideas or phrases needed to describe the circumstances of the case you are analyzing. The nearest equivalent to the original words of the model should be used in order to retain the validity of the flow of causal influence implied in the model. Of course, nothing is to prevent one from using metaphorical, lyrical or poetic language to free the imagination and gain new insights. That is all part of the process of "intellectual craftsmanship" (Mills, 1959).

CRITIQUE

Understandably, this overall approach may seem to be too vague or eclectic, or unstructured, yet too structured or vague in other ways, or too general or perhaps too confining. But these are in themselves criticisms that have been leveled at general systems theory, largely by those

unfamiliar with its techniques or by those with a bias against formal theory for whatever reason. The author tends to believe that those who are not theoretically inclined or who take an extreme position, either anti-theory or anti-quantification, or anti-humanistic are those most likely to object or fail to understand. Perhaps the next generation of scholars will have less fear of formal theory and be more receptive to such new breakthroughs. It surely must be clear that some such general approach will be necessary to begin to synthesize the many partial theories and perspectives now floating around or collecting dust in libraries. Because it does not respect the purity of thought of the gurus of any one tradition it is likely to be suspect by most observers until it becomes a natural part of our language and thought patterns, in the way Darwinian evolution or the Freudian unconscious have become since the demise of their forefathers.

EVALUATION

The model, once understood, should be easy to apply to most theoretical and social problems. Because it is so general or abstractly construed, it will inevitably be difficult to test as a whole, though individual hypotheses derived from it should be easily testable. It has relatively high information value for applicable problems, at least as a provocative starting point for analysis. It will not be of much value for predicting events, though it can be valuable for postdiction or retroduction based on its global concepts and hypotheses. It should however reach its greatest value in explanatory power because it is basically so simple and universally applicable. If the basic hypotheses are accepted it could hardly be otherwise. This basic policy mapping model has been portrayed in a way that seems theoretically sound, while still having the probability of proving useful to counselors and policy-makers as well as to the primary parties to the relationship under consideration. Only time and many trials of the method will provide the answers for each user.

In this spirit, the author has constructed numerous diagrams and theories following the basic pattern outlined here. Each of them at least delineates the three columns representing cultural, personal and situational roles. Each focuses on relationship interactions, their resultant structures and feedback to the principal acting parties. Separate theoretical papers in this mode are available from the author on the following five topics.

I) The first paper, on causation of juvenile delinquency lists the major causal variables within the three role types and indicates that the individual bargains with his perceptions of these variables over time in a way that places him typically in the category of juvenile delinquent or "good boy" behavior (1971).

II) A theory of "Developing the Learning Relationship" draws together the major factors impinging on teacher and learner in the context of the school (1977a).

III) The theory of "Identity Bargaining" lists all the major variables that influence the person making choices that direct his career development through nine stages of his career through a lifetime (1977b).

IV) The theory of "Love, Power and Conflict" points out the factors which hinder or promote love in the face of conflict. The alternatives to love are seen to be hate or indifference. The same model has been applied to interpersonal relationships (1977c) as well as to diplomatic negotiation between nations (1977d).

V) Finally, a paper and theory of utopia or "Social Actualization" suggests many of the key variables on which communal living arrangements or intentional communities have been based. A tentative ordering of the causal relationships between these variables is indicated (1978). Many other causal diagrams and theories could be elaborated with these taken as starting points or models of theory construction.

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